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The Difference of Teachers' Beliefs Related to Students' Practice of Confucian Analects: A Comparison among Three Chinese Fujian Ethnic Regions

Jon-Chao Hong, Ming-Yueh Hwang and Kai-Hsin Tai

Abstract

Confucian culture is an important shared cultural characteristic in Chinese societies. The transmissions under different historical effects lead to differences of perceiving students' practice of the Confucian Analects in society. The behaviors and beliefs of teachers represent their beliefs in observing students' moral practices. The present study examined students' practice of Confucian Analects observed by Chinese teachers in Fujian region of China, Taiwan, and Malaysia. Based on praxis approach, the present study contracted eight major constituents of Analects for explorative analysis. Seven hundred sixty questionnaires are returned and validated for explorative and comparative analyses. The results indicated that the constituents were correlated, and the teachers in the Fujian region thought that their students had the highest practice of the Confucian Analects, than Taiwan and Malaysia. The implication of this study suggested that cultural difference affects the perception of Chinese teachers in students' practice of Confucian Analects and can be deployed in educational settings to increase the life fulfillment of Confucian philosophy.

Keywords: Confucian analects, moral education, cultural effect, praxis approach, explorative analysis

1. Introduction

Confucian culture, considered a common characteristic in Chinese societies, was originated by Confucius in 551 B.C. The Confucian Analects (a record of the dialogs between Confucius and his disciples) are the foundation of Confucianism. The "orthodoxy" mentioned above refers to students' practice of Confucianism, which is also one of the main subjects embedded in Chinese education settings. In students with different Chinese heritages, as reflected from the different political, social, and economic factors in this particular area, their practice of the Confucian Analects would be different. Based on praxis approach, which refers to teachers introspect others of the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas, the present research attempts to explore the differences in students' practice of the

Confucian Analects as perceived by teachers in three Asian regions (the Fujian Region of China, Taiwan, and Malaysia).

2. Literature review

Chinese Confucianism and Western Aristotelian ethic have many things in common. They both emphasize the virtues of human beings [1], and they both believe that models of individuals are of great importance for teaching appropriate behavior [2]. To Confucius, a person with good morals was regarded as a gentleman (junzi), and to Aristotle, such a person was a phronimos. Both junzi and phronimos mean the distinguishing characteristics of honesty and proper behavior, which are both based on the need for human beings to cultivate and practice virtuous behavior. The concepts of a virtuous citizen can be traced back to the famous works of Plato and Aristotle, *Republic* and *Politics*, respectively, both of which stress the importance of citizenship [3]. Chan also mentions that Asians understand the significance of moral behavior because “ren” is the basis of social order, “li” is the basis of ethical behavior, and “jia” is the basis of family. Confucian culture is an important part of their cultural inheritance [4–7] in particular to those citizens who speak Chinese. Therefore, the present study is a preliminary empirical exploration of this concept to understand the factors affecting students’ practice of the Confucian Analects.

2.1 The Confucian Analects

The Confucian Analects state that human beings should be concerned with more than 20 virtues, such as benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom, loyalty, forbearance, faithfulness, humbleness, respect, filial piety, and so on. In order to conduct this current explorative research, the present study classified some core virtues into “benevolence,” “courtesy,” and “righteousness” to be elaborated as follows.

2.1.1 Denotation of benevolence

2.1.1.1 Self-discipline

Benevolence (ren) is the lifelong quest to be the most genuine, sincere, and humane person possible. “Benevolence” is the real sense of communication between individuals, which is essentially the relationship between “me and you.” The process of becoming ren, a benevolent gentleman or superior person, is essential for self-perfection as described by Confucius. Confucius believed that human perfection can be attained by anyone. Those who devote themselves to the process of ren are called junzi. People are encouraged to become superior people by self-discipline or self-control to make oneself more benevolent to others [8].

2.1.1.2 Generosity

One virtue specifically mentioned by Fowers [9] is generosity. Horrigan [10] defined generosity as the give-and-take of philanthropy that binds together givers and recipients. In brief, generosity can help us to become balanced and healthy, both mentally and physically. For example, Confucius said, “What are you going to repay kindness with? Meet resentment with straightness and respond to kindness with kindness” (Analects, 14:34). Indeed, benevolence comes about students’ practice of generosity originates from the self and not from others.

2.1.1.3 Reflection

Reflective thinking takes into consideration all of the relevant factors in a certain situation and produces non-sentimentally grounded reasons for action. Considering that reflection constitutes a crucial part of moral judgment, it is evident that emotions provide only a partial basis for considerate, dispassionate judgment in Confucian thought; therefore, radical emotional actions should be rejected accordingly [11]. In the Confucian Analects, the originally rational human nature comes to reflect on the stimulation of external objects by generating two types of emotional responses, viz., liking and disliking (or desire and aversion) with the judgment of others' psychological response (Analects, 16:29).

2.1.2 Denotation of courtesy

2.1.2.1 Respect

Respect remains an essential element in maintaining the status of the elderly [12, 13]. Confucius said, "Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you" (Analects 15:13). In another example, he said, "In serving his parents, a son may demonstrate with gentle; when son sees that parents are not inclined to follow son's suggestions, son should show an increased degree of compromise at the spot, but does not abandon his purpose to suggest them after a while with good condition; and he does not complain" (Analects, 4:18). Moreover, from [14] the analysis of the Analects, the forms of respect were distinguished, such as (1) care respect, providing care and services for elders or others; (2) victual respect, serving foods and drinks for others or elders' first choice; and (3) linguistic respect, using respectful language in speaking to others and so on.

2.1.2.2 Conservatism

Chinese ethics was characterized by a certain style of conservatism which held that change through individual action could only have limited influence on the environment, since the environment was ruled by external and contingent forces [15]. Confucian philosophy leads the Chinese to avoid extremism in expressing their opinions and curiosity to maintain harmony [16]. Confucius believed courtesy was a norm of good behavior. Any discourteous behavior would not be virtuous and would cause undesirable results [17]. In *The Analects*, ritual and courtesy (li) are conservative behaviors [1].

2.1.2.3 Prudence

In short, one could call wisdom a mature prudence. In Confucianism, prudence de-emphasizes self-interest holding that self-interest is the concern of the "mean man" for profit [18]. Confucius' disciple Zilu was called "bold," but Confucius reminded him that a truly virtuous person puts prudence first, because it can bring righteous virtue into its proper place (Analects, 17:23). Confucius asserted that in the bold person without prudence, knowledge would become "unruly."

2.1.3 Denotation of righteousness

2.1.3.1 Propriety

The Confucian approach requires one to hold a proper attitude toward striving for human virtues and profits [1]. A junzi is always considered as cunning, which

means to gain dubious ends and always has no anxieties and fears. On the contrary, a narrow-minded person loves property, always worries about material possessions, and is motivated by profit. For example, Confucius said, “Carefulness, without the rules of propriety, becomes timidity; boldness, without the rules of propriety, becomes insubordination; straightforwardness, without the rules of propriety, becomes rudeness” (Analects, 8:2). Thus, Chinese culture belittles those who without the rules of propriety will just say this and that but do nothing with righteousness.

2.1.3.2 Responsiveness

Chinese people are evaluated by many moral standards, for instance, loyal or disloyal ministers, upright or corrupt officials, filial or non-filial sons, and so on. Therefore, consideration and responsiveness become important and expected interpersonal behaviors [19]. For example, “Promises must be kept, actions must produce results” (Analects, 13:20). Confucian junzi holds that moral awareness and responsiveness are necessary for harmony in human relations. The ideal personality obliterates the subjectivity of individuals. The value of an individual is in one’s externality or integral nature. A superior person does not put blame on others but instead takes responsibility for misdeeds and is always considerate and entirely unselfish.

2.2 Confucian culture of the Chinese people in the three Asian regions

Chinese heritages under different historical transition have developed different practice of the Confucian Analects. In the 1970s, Mainland China experienced Confucianism lamentably suppressed. Recently, there has been a trend toward a revival and reopening of Confucian culture, such as open many Confucian schools around the world.

Taiwan, with more than 70% Fujianese heritages, has kept long thought of itself as a place for inheritance and transmission of traditional Chinese culture and orthodoxy due to several reasons: Confucianism has been included in teaching materials for school children, and Confucian culture is integrated into the teaching of the Chinese language. Taiwan society is having more experience with diversification and differences. For the past three decades, Confucianism has been encouraged and advocated by the governmental policy that in and of itself exemplifies the traditional use of Confucianism in politics.

Malaysia is a culturally diverse society, with ethnic Chinese heritages, mostly Fujianese, accounting for 24% of the people. Malaysian and English are the official languages of the country. Malaysian Fujianese pay close attention to their children’s education, which follows the best traditions of Chinese culture. Similar to the Taiwanese who study traditional Confucianism, new Malaysian Chinese are also aware of the conflicts of basic values between Confucianism and Western culture. Those oversea Chinese have been living in Malaysia for several generations, if there has been no fundamental change in the original values and inclinations of Confucianism would be interested to be examined.

3. Research hypotheses

The psychological process in between is affected by the internal cultural form and standard [20]. The “cultural meaning system” has therefore become an important model to explain cultural and social perceptions [21]. When personal

experience is provided, it is meaningful for the system. The process of social perception also changes because of culture. As such, with the diverse cultures, people have different perceptions and practices of traditional Confucian orthodoxy. The following hypotheses are proposed to guide this study:

Hypothesis 1: There are significant correlations among the constructs of the Analects.

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences in the perceptions of students' practicing the Analects among the three Asian regions.

4. Research design

The present study focused mainly on developing an instrument to measure the perception and practice of the Confucian Analects and employing the instrument to examine the perception of school teachers in their students' practice of the Confucian Analects in different regions.

4.1 Research procedure

For observational studies conducted in educational and psychological research, Vogt [22] identified that the two of the most common sampling strategies are convenience sampling and purposive sampling. He confirmed that this trend of having purposive sampling being the most common form of sampling is still true in contemporary social science research. Accordingly, the present study adopted the purposive sampling method based on those teachers who attended in-service professional development programs during the summer vacation of 2012. Questionnaires were delivered by those workshop organizers or administrators including the Educational Bureau of Fujian province, the Taiwan Teacher Professional Development Center, and the Malaysia Taiwan Alumni. The latter organization managed workshops particular for Chinese school teachers in summer vacations around south parts of Malaysia where most Fujianese live by. In regard to ethical issues, teachers were informed that they were not obliged to participate in this research project. The importance of maintaining confidentiality of personal information was also being stressed to participants in the introductory statements.

4.2 Research participants

The present study mainly explores the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects by Chinese teachers in three Asian regions. The study chose three regions where the subjects' ancestors all majorly came from the Fujian region, and their mother language was Minnanese (also known as Fujianese or Taiwanese). The research subjects were primary school teachers in the Fujian region of China, primary school teachers in Southern Malaysia (80% of whom can speak Minnanese), and primary school teachers in Southern Taiwan (80% of whom can speak Minnanese). For the study, there were 1200 questionnaires distributed, with 500 questionnaires to the Fujian region of China, 500 questionnaires to Taiwan, and 200 questionnaires to Malaysia. There were 760 questionnaires returned, with a return rate of 63.3%, which included 418 questionnaires from the Fujian region of China, 204 questionnaires from Taiwan, and 138 questionnaires from Malaysia. The majority of respondents were female 486 (63.9%). In age distribution, teachers aged 40 and younger accounted for 613 responses, with 122 samples from teachers aged 41–50 years and 25 samples from teachers aged 51 years and older.

4.3 Research instrument

According to the above exploration of the meaning of Confucian culture, the present study devised 80 questions in eight categories. First, the study invited 290 teachers in Taiwan to take a pilot test. Item analysis was adopted to identify inappropriate questions, leaving 59 questions to be included in the survey questionnaire. According to their personal perceptions, the surveyed teachers ranked the adjoining students (i.e., who were students ever being taught by the research participated teacher) on each question using a 5-point scale where 1 represented nearly no one, 2 represented few students, 3 represented some students, 4 represented most students, and 5 represented nearly all students.

5. Data analysis

The present study used SPSS 19 to analyze the descriptive data and perform confirmatory factor analysis including reliability analysis, validity analysis, and factor analysis. The Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to explore the correlation matrix between variables.

5.1 Descriptive analysis

The analysis of the descriptive statistics showed that when the average scores for the perception of students' practice of the Confucian Analects under different background variables such as gender, age, and distance from downtown are used as the criteria, questions with higher-than-average scores are predominant in four constructs: responsiveness, propriety, generosity, and respect. The teachers in both Taiwan and Malaysia had a lower recognition ($M < 3.0$) for the conservatism of the adjoining students. Conversely, the teachers in the Fujian region of China had a higher recognition ($M > 3.0$) for the conservatism of the adjoining students.

With regard to the construct of prudence, for the various background variables, the teachers' perceptions of the adjoining students' behavior were lower than their average perception for students' practice of the other constructs in the Confucian Analects. However, for the construct of respect, the perceptions of the teachers over 51 years of age of the adjoining students' behavior were lower than the average scores for all ages of the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects ($M = 3.09$). This was due in part to their more negative responses to the question, "Sons and daughters should show respect to their parents, do not defy their ideas; and the junior generation should actively take care of the elderly."

Teachers in Taiwan scored the adjoining students higher than average for responsiveness, propriety, generosity, and respect, but the lowest score was for conservatism. The perceptions of the teachers in Malaysia of the adjoining students' behavior were higher than the average scores in the three constructs of responsiveness, propriety, and respect, but not in the construct of generosity. The perceptions of the teachers in Malaysia of the adjoining students' conservatism were lowest, which was similar to the perceptions of the teachers in Taiwan. The perceptions of the teachers in the Fujian region of China of the adjoining students' behavior were higher than the total average scores for the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects, which was similar to the teachers in Malaysia.

However, the Chinese teachers' perceptions of the adjoining students' behavior achieved the lowest scores in the construct of self-discipline, revealing that when the racial, national, and social atmosphere is different, the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects are also different. For example, the

teachers in Taiwan and Malaysia thought that the adjoining students still curiously watch, inquire about, and talk much about things unrelated to them. The teachers in the Fujian region of China thought that the behavior of the adjoining students revealed a more self-centered approach to life, which led them to blame others for their mistakes.

5.2 Reliability and validity analyses

This study adapted exploratory factor analysis to examine the correlation among factors. Before factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .852; the results of the first factor analysis showed 15 factors with characteristic values greater than 1. As to the rotated component matrix, as shown by the scree plot, the characteristic value of the first five factors was greater than 2, and the cumulative explanatory power of the first eight components exceeded 50%. Therefore, 12 questions after the eighth constructs were deleted. After that, factor analysis was performed again. In terms of construct validity, the KMO value was .862, and there were 11 factors with characteristic values greater than 1, all factor loadings were statistically significant. The first eight components were taken, and the subsequent 14 questions were deleted due to their insignificant explanatory power. Finally, after the second factor analyses, the 33 questions were classified according to eight constructs: (1) prudence, (2) responsiveness, (3) conservatism, (4) propriety, (5) generosity, (6) self-discipline, (7) respect, and (8) reflection. The factors and questions are listed in **Table 1**.

| Qt. No. | Questions (– indicates questions scored in reverse order) | M | SD | Factor loading |
|--|--|------|------|----------------|
| Factor 1: Prudence $\alpha = 0.82$ | | | | |
| 1 | Young people are too libidinous (–) | 3.04 | 0.84 | 0.715 |
| 2 | People in the prime of life like to fight with others (–) | 3.15 | 0.81 | 0.777 |
| 3 | The aged are keen on getting petty advantages (–) | 3.14 | 0.81 | 0.802 |
| 4 | People speak out of turn (–) | 3.25 | 0.72 | 0.731 |
| 5 | People do not care about the facial expression and response of the other person and continue to talk on and on (–) | 3.32 | 0.69 | 0.728 |
| Factor 2: Responsiveness $\alpha = 0.82$ | | | | |
| 1 | People keep promises and match their words with actions | 3.45 | 0.72 | 0.752 |
| 2 | People do not brag about their good deeds | 3.33 | 0.78 | 0.630 |
| 3 | People are very happy to extend hospitality to friends traveling from remote places | 3.93 | 0.71 | 0.716 |
| 4 | People act according to the principles of right or wrong rather than the advantages or disadvantages to themselves | 3.06 | 0.82 | 0.613 |
| Factor 3: Conservatism $\alpha = 0.82$ | | | | |
| 1 | People do not curiously watch things that do not concern them | 2.95 | 0.86 | 0.864 |
| 2 | People do not inquire about things that do not concern them | 2.97 | 0.87 | 0.931 |
| 3 | People do not talk about things that do not concern them | 3.15 | 0.88 | 0.869 |
| Factor 4: Propriety $\alpha = 0.81$ | | | | |
| 1 | People offer help when other people are doing good things, but offer no help when they are doing bad things | 3.95 | 0.82 | 0.762 |
| 2 | People do not insert themselves into other people's business | 3.76 | 0.80 | 0.614 |

| Qt. No. | Questions (– indicates questions scored in reverse order) | M | SD | Factor loading |
|---|---|------|------|----------------|
| 3 | People do not do anything offensive to God and reason even if no one is watching them | 3.85 | 0.88 | 0.772 |
| 4 | People show sorrow and sympathy to unfortunate things and do not rejoice in the misfortune of others | 3.83 | 0.83 | 0.728 |
| Factor 5: Generosity $\alpha = 0.86$ | | | | |
| 1 | Although people dislike their superior's attitude toward them, they do not take the same attitude with their subordinates | 3.46 | 0.78 | 0.833 |
| 2 | Although people dislike their subordinates' attitude toward them, they do not take the same with their superiors | 3.53 | 0.78 | 0.841 |
| 3 | High-status people do not bully and oppress low-status people. Low-status people also do not rely on high-status people to achieve higher status | 3.13 | 0.87 | 0.745 |
| 4 | Do not inquire into the things in the past because they have already become facts | 3.19 | 0.83 | 0.743 |
| Factor 6: Self-discipline $\alpha = 0.82$ | | | | |
| 1 | People learn from the strengths of others. When seeing others' weaknesses, they remind themselves to make improvements | 3.31 | 0.80 | 0.701 |
| 2 | When fishing, people do not catch too many fish and are concerned for the environment | 3.01 | 0.88 | 0.801 |
| 3 | When hunting, people do not shoot sleeping birds; they do engage in sneak attacks; and they take no advantage from people unprepared | 2.98 | 0.91 | 0.819 |
| 4 | People forsake a luxurious and prideful life in favor of a frugal and conservative life | 3.11 | 0.83 | 0.793 |
| 5 | When people make mistakes, they do not shift the blame onto others; they learn their lessons and do not make the same mistakes again | 3.10 | 0.82 | 0.810 |
| 6 | People only care about eating and drinking sufficiently every day; they are mindless in doing right things and have no life goal (–) | 3.44 | 0.82 | 0.744 |
| Factor 7: Respect $\alpha = 0.86$ | | | | |
| 1 | Seeing their parents have faulted, sons and daughters give them advice tactfully. If the parents do not want to listen to the advice, their sons and daughters still show respect to them, do not defy their ideas, and talk to them later at an appropriate time | 3.12 | 0.83 | 0.539 |
| 2 | The junior generation actively takes care of the elder members of the family and helps them with their work or activities | 3.62 | 0.77 | 0.866 |
| 3 | Should there be delicious food, junior generation lets the elderly eat it first | 3.48 | 0.81 | 0.821 |
| Factor 8: Reflection $\alpha = 0.81$ | | | | |
| 1 | People do things impulsively and rashly, with no consideration for the outcome (–) | 3.22 | 0.79 | 0.795 |
| 2 | People think negatively and see others' intention pessimistically (–) | 3.24 | 0.76 | 0.828 |
| 3 | People do not care about what other people dislike; but what other people like affects their preferences (–) | 3.14 | 0.81 | 0.793 |
| 4 | People speak carefully and work hard and fast (+) | 3.05 | 0.71 | 0.828 |

Table 1.
Factors loading analysis.

Cronbach's α reliability analysis was used to investigate the reliability of the questionnaire. In this study, the Cronbach's α was 0.83 indicating that the questionnaire was reliable. The Cronbach's α reliabilities of the individual constructs were as follows: responsiveness, 0.82; conservatism, 0.82; propriety, 0.82;

generosity, 0.81; prudence, 0.86; self-discipline, 0.82; respect, 0.86; and reflection, 0.81, as shown in **Table 1**.

6. Research results

The results were analyzed in two steps. The first step, the degree of linear relationship between each construct was calculated and used Pearson's r coefficient of correlation. The second step, we adopted one-way ANOVA to compare the difference between teachers' perception of students' fulfillment in three areas.

6.1 Correlation analysis among different constructs

Regarding the correlation between each construct and the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects, each of the eight constructs had a high correlation with the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects. These eight constructs were also correlated to each other, implying that each construct was significantly affected by the others. As for the correlation between the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects and each construct, the positive correlation to prudence appeared in those constructs, responsiveness ($r = 0.135, p < 0.01$), propriety ($r = 0.116, p < 0.01$), self-discipline ($r = 0.141, p < 0.01$), and reflection ($r = 0.551, p < 0.001$) but negatively correlated to generosity ($r = -0.247, p < 0.01$). The positive correlation to responsiveness appeared in those constructs, conservatism ($r = 0.433, p < 0.001$), propriety ($r = 0.520, p < 0.001$), generosity ($r = 0.561, p < 0.001$), self-discipline ($r = 0.141, p < 0.01$), respect ($r = 0.574, p < 0.001$), and reflection ($r = 0.091, p < 0.05$). The positive correlation to conservatism appeared in those constructs, propriety ($r = 0.437, p < 0.001$), self-discipline ($r = 0.561, p < 0.001$), and respect ($r = 0.561, p < 0.001$), but negatively correlated to generosity ($r = -0.479, p < 0.001$). The positive correlation to propriety appeared in those constructs, generosity ($r = 0.535, p < 0.001$), self-discipline ($r = 0.438, p < 0.001$), self-discipline ($r = 0.453, p < 0.001$), and reflection ($r = 0.121, p < 0.01$). The positive correlation to generosity appeared in those constructs, self-discipline ($r = 0.584, p < 0.001$) and respect ($r = 0.419, p < 0.001$), but negatively correlated to reflection ($r = -0.172, p < 0.01$). The positive correlation to self-discipline appeared in those constructs, respect ($r = 0.457, p < 0.001$) and reflection ($r = 0.126, p < 0.01$) (**Table 2**).

Some interesting findings from the correlation analysis, for instance, generosity, were negatively correlated to prudence, conservatism, and reflection but positively correlated to responsiveness, propriety, self-discipline, and respect.

6.2 Comparisons of students' practice of *Confucian Analects* perceived by teachers in different region

Differences between three or more treatments were tested using one-way ANOVA followed by post hoc analysis using Scheffe test, which corrects p values for multiple comparisons [23]. To measure the magnitude of differences between constructs, effect size was calculated using Cohen's d [24]. Based on Cohen [25], the effect sizes for Scheffe method were expressed by Cohen's d with classification into small (Cohen's $d = 0.2$), medium (Cohen's $d = 0.5$), and large (Cohen's $d = 0.8$).

Statistical analysis showed that teachers in different regions thought differently about their adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects (**Table 3**). The relationships between fixed variables (different regions) and other eight

| | Prudence | Responsiveness | Conservatism | Propriety | Generosity | Self-discipline | Respect | Reflection | Overall |
|---|----------|----------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|---------|------------|---------|
| Prudence | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Responsiveness | 0.135** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Conservatism | −0.081 | 0.433*** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Propriety | 0.116* | 0.520*** | 0.437*** | 1 | | | | | |
| Generosity | −0.247** | 0.561*** | −0.479*** | 0.535*** | 1 | | | | |
| Self-discipline | 0.141** | 0.510*** | 0.453*** | 0.438*** | 0.584*** | 1 | | | |
| Respect | −0.071 | 0.574*** | 0.345*** | 0.453*** | 0.419*** | 0.457*** | 1 | | |
| Reflection | 0.551*** | 0.091* | −0.072 | 0.121** | −0.172** | 0.126** | 0.058 | 1 | |
| * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2.
Correlation matrix of different constructs.

| Fixed variable | Dependent variable | df | F | Significance | d |
|---|--------------------|----|--------|--------------|------|
| Three areas | Prudence | 2 | 5.006 | 0.007** | 0.28 |
| | Responsiveness | 2 | 5.084 | 0.007** | 0.42 |
| | Conservatism | 2 | 10.609 | 0.000*** | 0.36 |
| | Propriety | 2 | 26.574 | 0.000*** | 0.29 |
| | Generosity | 2 | 6.896 | 0.001** | 0.45 |
| | Self-discipline | 2 | 4.123 | 0.010* | 0.36 |
| | Respect | 2 | 13.624 | 0.000*** | 0.33 |
| | Reflection | 2 | 16.003 | 0.000*** | 0.41 |
| * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. | | | | | |

Table 3.
One-way ANOVA.

dimensions were tested using one-way ANOVA. From **Table 3**, all dimensions were shown to be statically significant ($p < 0.01$); the responses to different regions of Chinese teachers at all levels were influential. From the above results, multiple comparisons can be carried out (**Table 4**).

For multiple comparisons, the data of mean difference is first classified into Areas 1 and 2 in different directions; the results are shown in **Table 4**. Further comparison of the teachers in the three regions showed that the teachers in the Fujian region of China ($Md = -0.153$ and -0.494 are all negative: Taiwan < China and Malaysia < China) had the highest perceptions of their students' practice of the Confucian Analects, the teachers in Taiwan came next, and the teachers in Malaysia ($Md = -0.1049$ and -0.0494 are all negative: Taiwan < Malaysia and Fujian, China < Malaysia) had the lowest perceptions of the adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects (**Table 4**).

According to the above comparative results, the teachers in the Fujian region of China thought that the adjoining students had the highest practice of the Confucian Analects and believed that the Confucian Analects were practiced frequently. However, this may be because the students in the Fujian region believe that the Confucian Analects originated from the Chinese complex, leading to the appearance of pan-moralist performance. Therefore, the possibility of overestimation of the students' practice of the Confucian Analects must be investigated further. Berry and Sam [26] once commented that according to his life experience in different foreign countries, among the Chinese people in Taiwan, Singapore, and the Fujian region of China, those from the Fujian region of China think most highly of interests and have the most adventurous spirit.

| Area 1 | Area 2 | Mean (1–2) | Significance | Difference | Remarks |
|---|----------|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Taiwan | Malaysia | 0.1049 (⁠ [*]) | 0.010 [*] | Taiwan > Malaysia | China > Taiwan > Malaysia |
| | China | −0.0494 (⁠ [*]) | 0.031 [*] | Taiwan < China | |
| Malaysia | Taiwan | −0.1049 (⁠ [*]) | 0.010 [*] | Malaysia < Taiwan | Malaysia < China |
| | China | −0.1543 (⁠ [*]) | 0.000 ^{***} | Malaysia < China | |
| China | Taiwan | 0.494 (⁠ [*]) | 0.031 [*] | China > Taiwan | China > Malaysia |
| | Malaysia | 0.153 (⁠ [*]) | 0.000 ^{***} | China > Malaysia | |
| * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. | | | | | |

Table 4.
Post hoc comparisons.

Relative to the teachers in Fujian China, the teachers in Malaysia had lower perceptions of the surrounding students' practice of the Confucian Analects. The reason behind this may have been due to the influence of English education on the students of Malaysia. The teachers in Malaysia may have had higher expectations for students' practice of the lofty Confucian Analects. Therefore, the perceptions of the teachers in Malaysia of the adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects may have been underestimated.

7. Discussion

The results of the present study show that among the three Asian Fujianese-speaking regions that are deeply influenced by Confucian culture, Chinese teachers had different perceptions and concepts on students' practice of the Confucian Analects. In the development process of different regions using the same dialect (Minnanese or Fujianese), it appears that culture had created differences in perception. According to the correlation analysis, the result showed that all eight constructs were positively associated, which indicated that if one perceived their adjoining students could have a good practice in one construct of the Confucian Analects, and then other constructs could also be performed well.

An individual who exhibits *ren* is a *junzi*, which can be translated and idealized as "gentleman." For instance, Li and Wegerif [27] highlight "Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety." That supports behavior as *junzi* (Confucius, o.p 1893, 12: 1). As in cultivating students to be *junzi*, Confucian Analects attempt to discipline them as dependent on authority figures and obedient and conforming to rules and deadlines [28]; in corresponding to this assertion, Morony et al. [29] pointed out that Confucian Asian countries were lower on self-concept than European countries. In contrast to the confidence of students, Confucian Asian countries were higher than European countries, while they investigate the cross-cultural variance of mathematical self-beliefs in relation to mathematics achievement in two world regions: Confucian Asia (Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and Europe (Denmark, The Netherlands, Finland, Serbia, and Latvia). However, in comparing the Confucian Analects practice in different regions, the results showed that some constructs, conservatism and propriety, were superior from Fujian region to Taiwan and Malaysian regions. The results also indicated that in prudence, students from Taiwan were superior to Fujian; in self-discipline, students from Taiwan were superior to Fujian and Malaysia. On the other hand, the results revealed that in generosity and respect, students from Malaysia were superior to Taiwan and Fujian. However, the results demonstrated that in reflection, students from Fujian were superior to both Taiwan and Malaysia.

It is obvious that respect is defined by the Confucians as positive duty; a minister should take into account all the objective conditions to determine whether respect is a typical "imperfect duty" [30] (i.e., you do not entice a blame should you respect to others that you could simply not reason condition just thought it was imposed). Regarding Confucian as an unforgiving mindset, students do things with caution [31]. Where generosity is a part of Confucian forgiveness, students from Malaysia appear to be more generous than the other two areas. The influence of regional culture manifests itself in many facets of standardization and preferences [32]. This may be because the students in the Fujian region believe that educational

philosophy has emphasized these two virtues of the Confucian Analects, leading to the appearance of pan-moralist performance while answering the questionnaire.

Moreover, regarding the Confucian Analects' study, Tak and King [33] conducted interviews with individual contemporary Confucian merchants in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on their business practices. Their study centered on the perceived conflicts experienced by those Confucian merchants with respect to business practices that adhere to Confucian ethics and those that adhere to the notion of the maximization of profit. This may not explain some of the results found in the present study, which indicated that, in average, Chinese Malaysians had the lowest perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects.

8. Conclusion

The people of the three Asian regions (the Fujian region of China, Taiwan, and Malaysia) share Fujianese as the main dialect but are immersed in different social and cultural circumstances. In brief, the Chinese teachers in the Fujian region of China had the highest average perception of their adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects, teachers in Taiwan had a lower average perception of their adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects, and teachers in Malaysia had the lowest average perception of their adjoining students' practice of the Confucian Analects. Based on the high practice of the ethic, teachers are committed to school goals and values [34, 35] and are more willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to contribute to successful change that the success of schools depends fundamentally on. Therefore, the result of the present study can be applied to leadership practice in the society influenced by Confucianism; students observe obligations associated with different roles. According to Zhang et al. [36], the Confucian Analects should become the basis for school management to shape good school culture.

Again due to this study which adapted the praxis approach, those participants might have the "leniency or severity error" which is defined as the rater having the tendency to assign a higher or lower rating to an individual than is warranted by the rater's behavior [37]. In this case, students from different cultures may have different tendencies of leniency errors; thus, the results of this current research only can be explained based on the exclusion of cultural influence. The present study developed a scale for testing the perceptions of students' practice of the Confucian Analects by using Chinese teachers in the Asian regions, where Fujianese is considered the main dialect of the research subjects. Thus, this study is limited to the Fujianese-speaking area. However, Confucian Analects are not only popular in Fujianese-speaking area but also widespread in many Asian countries (e.g., Korea, Japan, etc.), so further studies may encompass other areas to realize the cultural effect on students' practice of Confucian Analects.

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Conflict of interest

This research was not funded, and the authors declare they have no conflict of interest.

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